

INFORMATION REPORT

USSR

DATE DISTR. 8 July 1954

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Background and Construction of the Kungrad-Aleksandrov-Gai Railway Line

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1. Even in Czarist times there had existed a plan to build a more direct railway route than the Moscow-Tashkent line. The planned route was Moscow-Saratov-Aleksandrov-Gai ("gai" means ravine) - Guryev (now called Chapayev) - Kungrad-Khiva-Chardzhou (later called Leninisk for a time) - Kerki. "Publicity" had also been purposely released, in order to alarm the UK, that the railway was supposed to continue through Afghanistan to Calcutta. In Czarist times the Moscow-Saratov line already existed and stopped at Aleksandrov-Gai. In 1929, at the time of the first Five Year Plan, the above extensive planned route was included in the plan by the Soviets, but only to Chardzhou. Construction on the line was begun, but, as in the case of other railway projects, was dropped in late 1930. The troubles arising from collectivization and the resultant lack of horses, which were needed for the construction, interfered with railway building. The plan called for a single track, broad gauge line. A double track line was not needed. About 10 kilometers were built from each end, i.e. from Aleksandrov-Gai and from Chardzhou, but the tracks were later removed. This line would be militarily important if, in the event of general hostilities, the Soviets launched an attack along the planned route from Central Asia toward Karachi [redacted]. The line would aid in developing the Turkmen "platz d'armes" (base of operations). 50X1
2. In 1946, the first post-World War II Five Year Plan included a requirement to build a railway line only from Chardzhou to Kungrad. This would be a pointless project, as why should a line be built only to Kungrad? Cotton is grown in the Kharemski Oasis there, along the Amu Darya River. Transportation of the cotton is taken care of by river steamers.

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3. Then, in approximately 1948 or 1949, the Soviets announced the "Great Stalin Plan" for the construction of numerous canals, including one from near Nukus on the Amu Darya to the Caspian. The canal was to follow the "UZBOI" - the previous bed of the Amu Darya - and end south of Krasnovoosk. Much work was done on this canal. In 1953 50X1 photographs, in the Soviet "Ogonyok" publication, of railway cars discharging equipment for the canal at a station near Nukus. This probably means that the railway was already completed to Kungrad. Or, if the equipment came from the north, it might indicate that the line was already built from Chapayev. The Soviets could have decided not to build a line from Aleksandrov-Gai, but it would be more practical to do so and thus have a direct railway line from Moscow. The route is level and has sufficient water. I, therefore, believe that by now 1954 the railway has been fully completed as planned, particularly as it was begun in 1946. I would like to repeat that this would be one of the most important railways militarily in the USSR and that the Soviet statement in 1946 that the line was to extend only to Kungrad must have been a deliberate deception.
4. Incidentally, the Soviet Encyclopaedia, which first began to be published in about 1930, indicated several railway lines on its maps as completed, when actually they were merely included in construction plans of the period. The line which is the subject of this report may have been one of those shown as completed at that time.

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